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FRANCO-GERMAN DEFENSE COOPERATION:
OUTLOOK AND IMPLICATIONS

BY

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France and Germany are likely to continue pursuing closer military ties and, on balance, it is in the interest of the United States to encourage them. Greater defense collaboration will strengthen the Atlantic Alliance's overall military capabilities, and militarily strong allies give the U.S. a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union. Neither Paris nor Bonn sees improved military cooperation as a substitute for NATO or the U.S. security guarantee.

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FRANCO-GERMAN DEFENSE COOPERATION: OUTLOOK AND IMPLICATIONS
AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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Postwar military cooperation between France and Germany dates from the late 1950s, when the two began to pursue joint weapons development and armaments production. The current state of intensified defense cooperation began in 1982, when French President Mitterrand and West German Chancellor Schmidt agreed to conduct "thorough exchanges of views on security problems." This led to the October 1982 decision to implement the defense clauses of the 1963 Elysee Treaty of Friendship.

Cooperation today includes increased consultation on the role of French nuclear forces if employed on German territory, cooperation within the joint Defense and Security Council and joint Franco-German Brigade, major training exercises at the brigade and division levels, and promotion of cooperative weapons production. Of the many accomplishments in Franco-German cooperation since 1982, three areas stand out; the institutionalization of high-level meetings at regular intervals, the improved preparations for possible French participation in the defense of Germany, and the agreement on consultations regarding the potential use of French tactical nuclear weapons on German soil.

France and Germany are likely to continue pursuing closer military ties and, on balance, it is in the interests of the United States to encourage them. Greater defense collaboration will strengthen the Atlantic Alliance's overall military capabilities, and militarily strong allies give the U.S. a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union. Neither Paris nor Bonn sees improved military cooperation as a substitute for NATO or the U.S. security guarantee.



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INTRODUCTION

For the West European Allies, the strategic picture has changed dramatically over the last year and a half. The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany, and the decision to effect a large-scale withdrawal of American military forces from Europe have upset the longstanding assumptions of West European security policies, which were based on the bipolar situation of the Cold War.

Our Allies acknowledge the many positive changes. They welcome, for example, political reform in the East and the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact as a threatening military alliance. However, most Allied governments view with great concern the prospect of a diminished U.S. military presence in Western Europe. Moreover, the future role of NATO's nuclear weapons as weapons of "last resort" is still being defined and is a source of concern, particularly for the Germans.

Allied leaders realize that the Soviet Union will remain the largest military power on the Continent, even with all its forces inside its own borders. Under the terms of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, the Soviets will account for

about thirty-five percent of conventional forces. If the Soviet Union were to break apart, the Russian republic by itself would still be the single greatest military power in Europe. The Allies, therefore, believe that Western vigilance must continue to balance Russian military power.¹

There is a broad-based political consensus among West Europeans on the need to cooperate more closely in the areas of foreign and security policy. Efforts to build a stronger West European political and defense identity within the Alliance -- the so-called European Pillar -- have been on the increase since the early 1980s. Examples include efforts to revive the Western European Union, the founding of the Independent European Program Group, and initiatives generated by Franco-German military cooperation.² The intent is to strengthen the NATO Alliance and retain a U.S. military presence in Europe.

The U.S. Administration supports increased West European military cooperation and coordination, within the overall framework of the Atlantic Alliance, including both bilateral efforts and those in the Western European Union.³ The recent initiative between German Foreign Minister Genscher and French Foreign Minister Dumas on a common European security policy emphasizes that the Atlantic Alliance, including a continuing military presence of the U.S. in Europe, remains indispensable for European security and stability.⁴

The idea of an enhanced West European defense effort returns periodically to the center of discussion among Europeans during times of a crisis of confidence in the U.S. and/or the credibility of its nuclear guarantee to Europe. Some Europeans are beginning to ask questions about the long-term future of their security system.⁵ Others believe that without closer cooperation they will not be able to protect their vital interests adequately in East-West negotiations or in NATO deliberations on alternative ways to distribute the economic burden of Western defense.⁶

Increasingly costly defense programs have given further urgency to the process. The Europeans hope that by coordinating arms policies and arms-related industrial policies as well as through some division of labor they can save money without losing military security. Finally, the reform movement in Eastern Europe gives many West European countries new hope of closer ties between both parts of Europe.⁷

Because of their security concerns, the West Europeans agree that it is important to develop and articulate their own views on a European Pillar, within NATO. They seek a stronger and more coherent European voice in Alliance policy deliberations than has existed in the past. However, they are far from unanimous on exactly what actions to take or, indeed, what a European Pillar

should look like. The Europeans have advanced many proposals as ways to increase the defense portion of a European Pillar. They include

- establish multinational corps, as agreed upon in NATO's London Declaration of July 1990 on a transformed NATO Alliance, to take into account the unification of Germany and to prevent Germany from being "abandoned" by its military allies.⁸
- create a European intervention force for out-of-area commitments.
- establish some joint European intelligence and communication satellites.
- create direct links between various European crisis management centers.
- coordinate French and British nuclear forces.
- expand on existing Franco-German defense cooperation.⁹

Most Europeans insist, however, that any future actions taken to strengthen NATO's European Pillar cannot substitute for U.S. participation in the Alliance. They recognize that only the

U.S. has the military power to match the Soviet Union or Russia in the future and protect Europe.

The growing Franco-German military relationship is due in part to questions about continued U.S. defense commitment to Europe. French and German defense planners believe that dangerous internal upheavals and policy reversals in the Soviet Union cannot be ignored, since the resulting pressures could include an attempt to regain lost territory and status. They see Gorbachev's future as uncertain and Soviet military power as "very considerable."¹⁰

The present strategic environment appears so unstable and unpredictable throughout eastern and southeastern Europe, and the USSR that former French Defense Minister Chevenement has described it as "a leap into the unknown for all Europeans." Consequently, Paris and Bonn feel that they have to maintain and modernize the main elements of their military postures. They are resisting any hasty and unwarranted weakening of the Atlantic Alliance and continue to press for more political and economic integration in the European Community. The Franco-German dialogue has become a dynamic force in the search for a European defense identity.¹¹ However, since reunification of Germany, there has been some German irritation over the French decision to withdraw all of its forces, except those belonging to the Franco-German Brigade, from German soil.

ORIGINS OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

Postwar military cooperation between France and Germany dates from the late 1950s. The French, Germans, and the Italians, under a secret agreement, held deliberations on the development of nuclear weapons. Even after de Gaulle terminated the 1957-58 negotiations, France and Germany remained involved with each other in nuclear weapons planning. They were both responsible for some delivery means for U.S. theater nuclear warheads stationed on West German soil until 1966, when France withdrew from NATO's integrated military structure.¹²

The French and Germans were also interested in joint weapon development as early as the 1950s. French leaders viewed defense industrial collaboration as a primary area of security cooperation with the Germans. In 1958, Paris and Bonn founded the Franco-German Institute of St. Louis in Alsace, which conducts weapons development and scientific research. Between the late 1950s and the late 1960s, joint armaments production produced a number of successes.

Joint projects included the Transall transport aircraft, the Roland surface-to-air missile system, the HOT and Milan antitank missiles, and the Alphajet trainer and tactical support aircraft.¹³ While these earlier efforts were successful, the

record since then has been more mixed. A notable failure was in the development of a new joint main battle tank.

The 1950s also saw the problem of German rearmament, which became inescapable once it was recognized that the Atlantic defense system required the presence of numerous divisions in Western Europe. The French proposed the creation of a European army (the European Defense Community or EDC), to include a German contingent. The French wanted a German army that would be weaker than the French, but stronger than the Russian. German supporters of the EDC saw rearmament as hastening the return to equality for Germany. They were immensely disappointed, when in August 1954 the French National Assembly refused by 319 to 264 votes even to take up proper discussion of the EDC treaty. French opponents of the treaty saw the American-supported German recovery as the cause or sign of French decline.¹⁴

The real roots of today's military cooperation between France and Germany, however, lie in the friendship treaty signed in 1963 by French President General Charles de Gaulle and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The treaty called for regular meetings between French and German officials and met the foreign policy goals of both governments.

General de Gaulle wanted to reduce Anglo-American influence on the European continent and hoped West German support would

help reach that objective. For de Gaulle, it was a bid for European leadership by France and Charles de Gaulle.¹⁵ The French also sought a buffer zone between France and the East. Adenauer, for his part, saw a policy of conciliation with France as important for the continued economic recovery of Germany. He also wanted French support for new West German policy initiatives toward Eastern Europe.¹⁶

There was an additional motivation as well. France early on had been concerned about possible German fascination with the Eastern European countries. Both de Gaulle and Adenauer had feared such leanings, with Adenauer in particular mistrusting those Germans who might try to "dance between the two blocs." The two men had signed the original Elysee Treaty in 1963 in part to fight such temptations.¹⁷

In the fall of 1963, Ludwig Erhard succeeded Adenauer as Chancellor, and differences arose between Paris and Bonn. Erhard did not view French policy projects with as much sympathy as Adenauer: Erhard was oriented more toward the U.S. and Canada. Over the next twenty years, Franco-German military cooperation developed gradually, with no major breakthroughs.¹⁸

Franco-German collaboration had its ups and downs in the 1960s and 1970s and several factors played significant roles. The first involved the particular political and economic views of

successive French presidents and West German chancellors. The second involved the strategic concepts of high-ranking French officers, who are after all never isolated from the politicians in France.

When de Gaulle announced in early 1966 that France would withdraw from NATO's military command structure and that NATO would have to remove its bases and command facilities from French territory, Bonn feared that German security would suffer. Moreover, there were legal and political questions surrounding the presence of French troops on West German soil, once they were withdrawn from NATO and returned to complete French authority. An accord signed in 1966 with Bonn resolved these issues, with West Germany, in effect, consenting to the continuing presence of French troops in Germany on French terms.¹⁹

In 1967, the French formulated a doctrine of strategic deterrence called "tous azimuts" or "all horizons" defense. The new doctrine clearly overestimated the capabilities of the French nuclear arsenal. Nonetheless, the doctrine, articulated by General Charles Ailleret, had as its purpose to complement de Gaulle's political foreign policy and French independence and national glory. For the West German Government, however, this doctrine caused apprehension. It was at odds with the NATO Alliance and could cause harm to German security objectives.²⁰

Paris modified the Ailleret doctrine in May 1969 after de Gaulle left office. In contrast to the "all azimuths" orientation, French Chief of Staff General Michel Fourquet identified the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact as the potential main enemy. He introduced a new French doctrine, in which conventional forces were tightly linked with nuclear weapons. Then, as now, the French publicly rejected NATO's strategy of flexible response with, in the French view, its implications for extended nuclear warfighting in Europe.

In the early 1970s, while France remained outside the integrated military structure of NATO, the French benefitted from their political membership in the Alliance in many areas. They continued to receive, for example, military intelligence through NATO channels. The French, moreover, were never excluded from the major decisions and developments in NATO with the exception of nuclear matters.

French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, in 1975, further modified French military doctrine. He declared that France could not isolate its security from a European context and that Paris would have to reexamine the idea of France as a self-reliant sanctuary.²¹ In 1976, General Guy Mery, Chief of Staff of the French Armed Forces, extended this policy line and suggested that France would be willing to take part in the forward, first battle, once the political decision was made, which was not to be

automatic. French forces, however, still would not participate in NATO's forward preparations in times of peace, or be deployed forward on the line in the Central Region's "layer cake" force disposition.

Thus, French forces could participate in the NATO defense of West Germany. French tactical nuclear weapons, however, remained exclusively for the protection of French conventional forces, and strategic nuclear arms served as the ultimate backup in the defense of French territory. The French called this linkage of their conventional and nuclear weapons the "arsenal of deterrence."

DEFENSE COOPERATION FORMALIZED

The current state of intensified defense cooperation began in February 1982, when President Mitterrand and Chancellor Schmidt agreed to conduct "thorough exchanges of views on security problems." This led to the October 1982 Mitterrand/Chancellor Kohl decision to implement fully the defense clauses of the 1963 Elysee treaty.

During the October 1982 Franco-German summit, foreign and defense ministers aired major strategic questions for the first time. These questions included the role of the French nuclear deterrent and the modernization, employment doctrine, and

targeting on German territory of French tactical nuclear forces stationed near the German border in Alsace. This was a major step forward. Earlier joint meetings had concentrated on cooperative weapons production and other lower-level military issues.²²

Mitterrand and Kohl agreed on many strategic questions and by the end of 1982 decided to institutionalize cooperation by activating a permanent Franco-German Committee for Security and Defense. This committee would coordinate the security policies of the two countries and improve military cooperation.

There were three main factors that led France in 1982 to intensify her existing security cooperation with Germany; concern over the high levels of Soviet armament efforts, doubts about the permanence of the U.S. security guarantee for Europe, and French fears of pacifist and neutralist tendencies in West Germany.²³ At the same time, the Germans were eager to bring France closer again to NATO and thereby strengthen the Alliance as a whole. As far as the Germans were concerned, however, crucial problems existed despite their contacts with French forces of all shapes and sizes since 1963.

A critical issue was French nuclear policy. Germany had no information on French nuclear weapons, nor did anyone in Germany know exactly where France's "vital interests" lay. It was an

open question whether the French would employ tactical nuclear weapons on German territory or launch them from German soil. Nor did the Germans know whether France would participate in a timely fashion in the defense of the Central Region, an issue that directly affected elementary German security interests. Finally, the failure of the joint tank project in mid-1982 cast a cloud over Franco-German defense industrial cooperation, which until then had been harmonious and successful.²⁴

The revitalization of Franco-German defense cooperation in the early 1980s was to continue throughout the decade. The French needed West Germany, anchored in the West, as a militarily strong bulwark or glacis between France and the Warsaw Pact. After the 1982 summit, the French would accelerate their efforts to tie West Germany more closely into a West European system that would counter what the French perceived, probably without foundation, as a dangerous German drift to the East. The French above all wanted German funds for cooperative weapons development programs. For their part, the Germans were intent on drawing the French closer to NATO, in order to strengthen the Alliance and the defense of Germany, but not to replace the American extended deterrent.

SUCCESSES

The establishment of the Franco-German Committee in 1982

revived three task forces that subsequently have been meeting regularly on strategic issues, armaments collaboration, and military cooperation. These talks have become a major feature of relations between the two states. They include semi-annual summits, periodic meetings of defense and foreign ministers and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and numerous lower-level contacts.²⁵

These discussions made an impact almost immediately. The strategic issues task force discussed such major issues as the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, shorter-range intermediate nuclear forces, and other nuclear matters. Senior German officials including then-Chancellor Schmidt began to ask for influence over any French decision to launch nuclear weapons against targets on German soil, including East Germany. The Germans wanted the French to harmonize their employment procedures with those of NATO.²⁶

As a consequence of German interest in French nuclear policy, French Gaullist leader Chirac in late 1983 suggested the possibility of appropriate German participation in an independent nuclear deterrent. The French Government quickly shelved the idea, but other French officials suggested that some understanding could be reached with West Germany on the nuclear targeting issue.²⁷

By 1983, Germany faced a political crisis involving the

deployment of NATO intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Western Europe. These systems were intended to offset a range of Soviet military advantages, including but not exclusively the SS-20 systems. Chancellor Kohl asked for French solidarity and Mitterrand used the twentieth anniversary of the Elysee Treaty to make an extraordinary appeal before the West German Parliament for German loyalty and German INF deployment. This action did not cost the French anything since the NATO systems were not destined for French soil.

Mitterrand had several crucial political and strategic motives in making the speech. The French realized that Germany could no longer be taken for granted, nor could the U.S. presence in Western Europe be regarded as a constant factor forever. Without the deployment of INF, Mitterrand recognized a very real danger of a decoupling of the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal from the defense of Western Europe.²⁸

French strategic planners were beginning to question French strategy and the notion that France could safely play the role of a CINCENT reserve in case of Soviet aggression and decide later where and when to become militarily engaged. Finally, real-time intelligence requirements and the need to take part in NATO's secrets persuaded many in the French military establishment of the virtues of closer Franco-German cooperation.²⁹

Around this same time, in the early to mid-1980s, in response to the Soviet threat to Europe, the French made two important changes that, in effect, enlarged France's national sanctuary to all but encompass the Federal Republic of Germany. The first was in the area of French tactical nuclear force modernization. One of the most important programs was the move to replace the Pluton short-range ballistic missile with the Hades, which has an advertised range of some 500 kilometers. This program took into account German sensitivities over French tactical nuclear weapons hitting German soil -- East or West.³⁰

The Germans consistently have sought some type of cooperation and harmonization of U.S., British, and French nuclear forces. They particularly have wanted the French to move away from the nearly automatic nuclear employment contained in their nuclear strategy. Significantly, in February 1986 Mitterrand publicly committed France to consult -- time and circumstances permitting -- with the West German Chancellor before employing tactical nuclear forces on German territory.³¹

By 1986, all the major parties in France, except the Communists, had endorsed the concept of an "enlarged sanctuary." The move reflected a dramatic shift in French public opinion. A 1985 Le Monde poll showed that fifty-seven percent of respondents believed that France should hurry to aid Germany if it were 'seriously threatened.' Forty-seven percent said such an event

would constitute a threat to 'the vital interests' of France and favored extending the nuclear guarantee to Germany.³²

The second major change was at the conventional level, as outlined in the French 1984-1988 Defense Program Law, and established a Rapid Action Force (Force d'Action Rapide(FAR)). The FAR is an air-transportable conventional force of up to 47,000 troops capable of deploying some 250 kilometers forward along the central front in West Germany as a supplement to the First French Army or projecting power into the Third World. The FAR's establishment signified an important shift in French defense thinking even if the overall force improvements were modest.³³

The FAR was intended to give France the ability to quickly reinforce NATO forces in Germany and to intervene overseas to protect French commitments. The FAR is a composite, Army corps-sized unit comprising up to five specialized Army divisions specially trained for foreign intervention;

- 4th Airmobile Division
- 6th Light Armored Division
- 9th Marine Infantry Division
- 11th Parachute Division
- 27th Mountain Infantry Division
- plus a logistics brigade and seven support units.

The FAR groups existing units together to facilitate command, coordination, and training.³⁴ One key reason for developing the FAR, according to official French statements, was to reassure the West Germans of the French commitment to their defense even though French military forces remained outside NATO.³⁵

Another example of cooperation in conventional force planning was the decision in the summer of 1987 by Paris and Bonn to establish a joint brigade of French and German troops. Chancellor Kohl suggested the idea in June 1987 and the French responded positively. The brigade numbers 4,200 troops, equally divided between nations and was formed by the end of 1988. Official activation took place in December 1988 and full strength was reached in late 1990. Initially, a French brigadier general commands the joint brigade with a German colonel as deputy. This arrangement will alternate.³⁶

The brigade consists of a German infantry battalion, a German artillery battalion, a French light tank regiment, a French infantry regiment, a mixed Headquarters and service battalion, a French armored reconnaissance company, and a German armored engineer company. The forces are stationed near Stuttgart, in southwest Germany, with headquarters in Boeblingen. Most of the French troops were drawn from the FAR; German troops come from territorial units not allocated to NATO in time of

peace.³⁷

The French insist they will remain militarily independent of NATO, but the Germans hope that the establishment of the joint brigade eventually will trigger some kind of de facto reentry, through the back door, of French military forces into NATO.³⁸

Prior to the establishment of the joint brigade, there had been exercises that strongly hinted of more cooperation in the conventional force arena. Exercise "Franconian Shield" in 1986 saw the French 1st Armored Division from Trier participate for the first time in German Army maneuvers. Then, Franco-German forces engaged in large-scale maneuvers in southwest Germany in September 1987. That exercise, called "Bold Sparrow" involved 20,000 French troops and some 55,000 German soldiers. France drew the participating forces from the FAR forces, especially the 4th Airmobile Division and the 6th Light Armored Division.

During the "Bold Sparrow" exercise, troops from the FAR at the head of reinforcements from the First French Army mounted a counter-attack in Bavaria only seventy kilometers from the eastern border of the Federal Republic. This was significantly east of the arc formed by Rotterdam, Dortmund, and Munich that had been the eastern boundary designated by the so-called Ferber-Valentin agreement of 1974, named for the French Joint Chief of Staff General Valentin and the German CINCENT General Ferber.

Under this accord, the French agreed to employ the First French Army and their tactical air forces alongside NATO in a reserve role within the Central Region. This would be done, however, only on a French political decision.³⁹ In the aforementioned exercise, however, French forces came under the operational control of a German corps commander. Both French and German defense ministers saw the exercise as promoting a true European pillar of the defense that NATO requires to preserve the peace.

Exercise "Bold Sparrow" had important training aspects for the French. For the first time, the FAR had participated in an exercise with 20,000 of its own troops. Moreover, smaller FAR units previously had only experienced deployment to Africa and other parts of the world where conditions differ greatly from Central Europe. Finally, "Bold Sparrow" offered the French side its first opportunity to study the FAR's structure, equipment, and composition with a view toward maintaining its sustainability for deployment to Germany, where combat largely would be determined by tank warfare.⁴⁰

Following "Bold Sparrow", President Mitterrand proposed setting up a Franco-German Defense Council in order to coordinate defense and disarmament policy, stimulate recurrent joint maneuvers, and promote cooperative weapons production. Chancellor Kohl accepted, seeing it as a great step toward a Franco-German and European security community. He viewed the

Defense Council and the Franco-German Brigade as strengthening the European commitment to NATO.

A special protocol to the 1963 Elysee Treaty established the Franco-German Defense and Security Council in April 1989. It absorbed the joint Defense and Security Committee. The Council consists of the heads of state and government, plus the foreign and defense ministers. The respective Joint Chiefs of Staff are ex-officio members. The Council meets at least twice a year and there is a secretariat in Paris to support it.⁴¹

Prime Minister Chirac gave Franco-German military cooperation a further boost in a speech he gave in December 1987. Chirac said that if West Germany were attacked, France's engagement on its side would be immediate and without reservation. In Chirac's words, "there cannot be a battle for Germany and a battle for France."⁴²

Mitterrand agreed. He clearly hoped that a gradual departure from the Gaullist doctrine of complete French strategic independence towards the new concept of Franco-German joint military deployment would deter a Soviet attack, while reassuring anxious West Europeans, particularly the Germans.⁴³

Major exercises at brigade and divisional level have taken place every year since 1984, held on French or German territory.

In 1989, a German reinforced armored brigade carried out an exercise in the Champagne with II French Corps. In 1990, the 7 Armored Division from Besancon took part in an exercise with II German Corps. This year, a joint exercise, which will take place in the Alsace and on the Baden plain, will be significant because it will include a Rhine river crossing involving reservists and the German Territorial Command.⁴⁴

France and Germany supplement these training exercises with many small inter-unit exchanges down to section level, and decentralize the organization of this sort of exchange. There are some one hundred per year. They place special emphasis on joint training for exchange groups at the various national training establishments. Paris and Bonn have also established contacts at the very highest level of military studies. The Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires and its German counterpart, the Bundessicherheitsakademie, organize a fifteen-day joint seminar each year.⁴⁵

In the area of equipment cooperation, the French and Germans have signed ten specific technical agreements on research. Joint construction projects continue to constitute one of the firm foundations of Franco-German cooperation. They have produced the Milan and HOT antitank missiles and the Roland SAM system. A 1987 agreement between the two defense ministers covers the joint construction of the Tiger helicopter, which will be produced in

two versions -- an antitank version with HOT initially and later with a new jointly developed third-generation missile system and a support-protection version primarily in an anti-helicopter role.⁴⁶

France and Germany, together with other countries are involved in the production of the MLRS multiple-launch rocket system. For battlefield observation, the CL289 program will equip both countries with reconnaissance drones capable of locating targets beyond the forward contact area. The introduction of the Brevel light radio-controlled drone, a cooperative development by Matra and MBB, will enhance this system. Both countries see a focus on interoperability as crucial given the uncertain situation on the European continent.⁴⁷

MAIN LINES OF COOPERATION

Franco-German security cooperation has developed along six principal lines or areas of mutual understanding. First, Paris insists more on national independence, while Bonn insists more on solidarity with the U.S. and Canada. Second, Franco-German cooperation is privileged, but not exclusive. Both countries want to extend cooperation to other members of NATO, for example, nuclear cooperation between France and the Great Britain. Third, there is a consensus among the military that strategic as well as

operational coordination between French forces and NATO is feasible without an unqualified return of France to full military integration. Nonetheless, the Germans have long seen the French role as presenting a dangerous precedent.⁴⁸

The Germans also believe that cooperation with the French can be organized without fundamental changes in military strategic and operational doctrines. Some German officials believe the differences between French military strategic doctrine and NATO's flexible response are, in fact, not so great that they cannot in practice be reconciled or reduced.⁴⁹ Fifth, full French reintegration cannot and should not be the paramount concern of enhanced cooperation nor should it be excluded, if and when Paris wants to reexamine past policies.⁵⁰

Finally, while the nuclear dimension of the Franco-German relationship lacks clarity, this has been acceptable thus far. The German Government has not demanded a full-fledged guarantee nor has this guarantee been offered by the French. Eventually, however, both sides will have to address some tough issues, for example, French tactical nuclear targeting, dual-key solutions to the nuclear problem, and the question of a German veto.⁵¹

Of the many accomplishments in Franco-German cooperation since 1982, three areas stand out.

- the institutionalization of high-level meetings at regular intervals.

- the improved preparations for possible French participation in the defense of Germany.

- the agreement on consultations regarding the potential use of French tactical nuclear weapons on German soil.⁵²

Working groups, meeting frequently, discuss political strategic affairs including threat assessments, crisis management planning, and arms control. French participation in joint exercises has given a measure of physical credibility to French commitments to the defense of Germany. Finally, the French decision on consultations about the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons, time permitting, was unprecedented.⁵³

PROBLEM AREAS AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP

Important differences over nuclear force planning, conventional force planning, and armaments production have served to constrain Franco-German cooperation. Differences in strategic priorities also have hindered progress.

One of the reasons that France left NATO was the firm belief that its nuclear decisionmaking could not be shared. The French

believed that remaining in the integrated military structure would undermine France's status as an autonomous nuclear power. It was not until February 1986 that France agreed to accept any formal nuclear coordination or consultation obligations with the Germans. And that agreement limits France's obligation to consulting about nuclear weapons that might be used on or launched from German soil and then only within "the limits imposed by the extreme rapidity of such decisions."⁵⁴

The French refuse to discuss the targeting issue directly, although they have agreed to establish military-to-military discussions on nuclear questions, set up a Paris-Bonn "hotline", and give Bonn prior notice of a French decision to fire nuclear weapons on German soil.⁵⁵

The French have made it clear that a German veto over French use of tactical nuclear weapons is out of the question. Nor are the Germans likely to have any decisive influence over French targeting or planning for the conduct of nuclear operations, despite the increased coordination. The French argue that employment decisions against mobile targets cannot be planned in advance and remain opposed to an accord that, in their view, limits the flexibility of the French President in choosing the time, place, and system for making a strike of "ultimate warning."⁵⁶

The French believe that deterrence would be undermined if French nuclear strike plans became Franco-German arrangements. The credibility of France's willingness to place its national survival at risk could be degraded in Soviet eyes. Finally, the French question Germany's ability to safeguard sensitive nuclear secrets. The precise details of French nuclear targeting are held extremely close in France, and the French are unlikely to share this information with any foreign government.⁵⁷

The Germans, nonetheless, want more information on French nuclear target planning. They claim that the French February 1986 decision in favor of tactical nuclear consultations when German territory is involved is something the French should have done years ago. Moreover, many Germans feel that Germany has been helping indirectly to pay for French nuclear forces over the years by carrying so much of the conventional force burden in Western Europe. They believe France owes Germany some greater say in the shaping of France's nuclear arsenal and its employment doctrine, since German territory is affected.⁵⁸

German military planners, moreover, insist that French nuclear employment plans must be synchronized with NATO plans and intended to meet the political aim of restoring deterrence. They must be used to bring about a prompt termination of the conflict on terms acceptable to the West. The Germans fear the French will use nuclear weapons automatically according to their rigid

"arsenal of deterrence" strategy, which excludes the notions of flexible response and coordination with the NATO nuclear powers. They do not want Germany destroyed for French doctrinal, military strategic reasons.⁵⁹ This points up the differences between the Germans and the French on the use of nuclear weapons.

Finally, many Germans see French nuclear forces both contributing to overall Western deterrence and as a base for a more autonomous West European defense in the future. However, most German politicians seek the protection of French nuclear forces in addition to, not as an alternative to, U.S. and NATO's own nuclear weapons. A dual-key arrangement and probably an explicit French nuclear guarantee to Germany will remain elusive as long as the French continue to see them as undermining the credibility of France's deterrent threats.⁶⁰

Conventional force planning, on the other hand, is emphasized in Franco-German military cooperation. The French have some reservations about conventional force planning given the nuclear linkage in their strategy. Nonetheless, they feel that the Germans exaggerate their concern about French reluctance to guarantee automatic military engagement on behalf of Germany in a crisis or conflict. The Germans, for their part, long have wanted to draw the French closer to NATO and the defense of Germany. They want clarification of the relationship between French declarations of solidarity with its allies and remaining

French restrictions on cooperation and possible wartime operations.⁶¹

Joint military exercises have most clearly demonstrated France's will and commitment to defend Germany. Participants intend for the exercises to harmonize their respective operational plans, improve French logistics movements, deconflict possible French movements with the other Allies, and promote better understanding of strategic and tactical objectives. Exercise "Bold Sparrow" revealed some rather serious problems of logistics, equipment interoperability, and linguistics. Moreover, there were practical problems brought about by French unfamiliarity, relatively speaking, with NATO plans and procedures.⁶²

German military planners, however, are confident that these problems can be worked out eventually, although major equipment differences will take years to overcome. On the thorny problem of command relationships, the French were willing to place their forces under the operational control of a West German corps, but only after the corps was temporarily released from NATO command by SACEUR for the duration of the exercise.

The Germans have always had doubts about the combat utility of the French Rapid Action Force(FAR). As mentioned above, the French created the FAR in 1983 to improve French ability to

intervene promptly and flexibly in the defense of West Germany. Then French Army Chief of Staff General Imbot said the FAR would be capable of engaging Soviet operational maneuver groups as large as one or two divisions far forward in West Germany. Some German planners, however, have questioned from the beginning how decisively useful an intervention formation the FAR really is. Many critics have stated that the French conceived the FAR more as an instrument of crisis management and political solidarity than as a command for sustained military operations.⁶³

There certainly are problems with the FAR that tend to limit its military value in combat, not the least of which is the uncertainty of its availability and employment given the politically-imposed constraints. The FAR is, as was shown above, a heterogeneous force of five divisions with varying levels of mobility and utility. It is not even clear that the 27th Alpine Division would be released in wartime from its mission of defending the French missile silos on the Albion Plateau. The FAR lacks antitank missiles and night-vision avionics and would be dependent on German forces for air cover and logistical support. Finally, since the FAR includes France's overseas intervention forces, part of the FAR might be committed overseas at the outbreak of war in Europe.⁶⁴

The French still refuse to accept responsibility for a specific wartime mission or geographic area. They argue that

their armed forces constitute the only operational reserve of NATO based in Europe. Therefore, they need to be flexible and not tied down with a specific established wartime assignment. The Germans argue that a reserve should be reliable and that Paris ought to make an unequivocal commitment to act.⁶⁵

In the area of armaments production, the 1970s and 1980s have seen few major successes. The agreement in 1984 on Franco-German development of a supersonic antiship missile to succeed the Exocet is a rare example of a recent bilateral project without serious setbacks. Differences in design philosophy and schedule requirements by mid-1982 effectively doomed the project for a joint Franco-German main battle tank. Even the joint antitank helicopter project -- the most important Franco-German armaments project since the late 1960s -- has a long troubled history that includes cost overruns, and mission and design disagreements.⁶⁶

In spite of this record, the French appear determined to seek joint armaments programs, even if they end up taking longer and costing more than national programs. France hopes to share development costs and obtain economies of scale in production, which will lower unit costs. Moreover, the French hope that this cooperation will result in a better technological/industrial base for a more independent and prosperous Europe. The promotion of arms exports is also a factor.⁶⁷

The Germans, on the other hand, seem less worried about maintaining a strong arms industry as a key element of its national economy. Bonn appears less preoccupied with cultivating arms export markets, compared to the French. Additionally, Germany has fewer reservations about buying high-technology U.S. military systems. Some Germans accuse the French of wanting the Germans to pay for advanced conventional weapons so that France can concentrate on funding its costly national nuclear programs.⁶⁸

Finally, differences in national strategic priorities have hindered progress in Franco-German affairs. The French strategy of the "arsenal of deterrence" is incompatible with the present and future NATO military strategy. Germany and other NATO countries are unwilling to risk their relationships with the U.S.

France emphasizes nuclear weapons for national purposes and rules out any return to the integrated military structure of NATO and any automatic commitment to participate in the defense of the Central Region. Germany seeks the firmest possible defense commitments from its Allies. Bonn wants them to maintain a physical military presence in Germany beyond the French forces in the Franco-German Brigade to include plans for the use of nuclear weapons in defense of Germany.⁶⁹

France emphasizes hedging against U.S unreliability by increasing Franco-German (and West European) defense cooperation. Germany places more emphasis on maintaining U.S. and Allied commitments within the integrated NATO structure.⁷⁰

Franco-German cooperation has not been entirely noncontroversial among the Allies. The British, for example, tend to see separate arrangements like a Franco-German axis and a joint brigade as detracting from the Atlantic Alliance by setting up competing structures. The UK has been seeking ways to strengthen military cooperation with West Germany within the framework of NATO. For example, London formed a bilateral commission to study possibilities for the joint training of troops, an exchange of soldiers, and plans for joint procurement. The basis for London's effort was the stationing of some 70,000 British troops in Germany.⁷¹

The British hoped that the resulting increased Anglo-German cooperation would strengthen the European Pillar of NATO. With regard to Franco-German exercises, the British point out that in 1987, the same year that "Bold Sparrow" involved 20,000 French troops, the Anglo-German "Lion Heart" maneuver involved some 56,000 British troops and brought another 57,000 over to northern Germany.⁷² The Germans, however, were suspicious. Bonn saw British efforts designed to refocus Germany away from France and many believed a joint Anglo-German unit would be largely

symbolic.⁷³

SACEUR reportedly was displeased as well and wanted the Franco-German Brigade to come under NATO command. Bonn, however, acquiesced to French insistence that the Brigade remain outside NATO.⁷⁴ Both French and German governments insist that their common purpose is to strengthen the Alliance with their cooperation and security policy. They seek to bolster the presence of U.S. forces in Europe, especially on German soil, to support a forward presence in the Central Region, and to facilitate French participation in the common defense and in NATO's crisis management. Neither country seeks to replace the American with a French nuclear deterrent.⁷⁵

OUTLOOK

Despite the problems, Paris and Bonn are likely to pursue closer military ties. The French will have three main objectives; to maintain France's special status apart from NATO's integrated military structure, retain U.S. commitments and forces in Europe, and promote closer West European security cooperation, presumably under French leadership. Paris believes the Europeans should play an increased role in the Alliance for their own defense.

The French vision is one of a stronger and more autonomous

West European defense posture, centered around close Franco-German relations. The French have tried, with increasing difficulty, to sustain three kinds of forces -- strategic nuclear forces, substantial heavy conventional forces for the Central Region, and intervention forces for other contingencies. It is becoming clear in Paris, however, that France can no longer sustain such an approach. This is particularly true when it may have to undertake a major new effort (including space and perhaps also in defense technologies) in order to preserve the credibility of its minimum deterrents.⁷⁶ The result will be additional cuts in conventional forces and a shortage of sophisticated conventional equipment.

Therefore, rather than each country going its own way and making its own cuts to the detriment of collective security, France and Germany are likely to coordinate their defense planning in such a way as to permit a more efficient concentration of capital investment and manpower. Cooperative actions could include

- the promotion of a common European foreign and security policy with an integral role in the process for the Western European Union.⁷⁷
- the constitution of a joint European rapid intervention force for peacekeeping and out-of-area contingencies.

- intensification of joint research and development programs and weapons concepts in the framework of a kind of European DARPA to be created within a European Pillar of NATO.
- closer consultation on French nuclear weapons. The Germans will seek the adaptation of French nuclear employment strategy to the future amended NATO military strategy.
- joint European anti-satellite (ASAT) capability.⁷⁸

Thus, French defense policy likely will continue to evolve toward establishing closer links to Germany, not so much to reassure German anxieties in the new European security calculus, but to tie the unified Germany to Western Europe and thereby continue to provide a shield for France against the East.⁷⁹ The French remain concerned over a perceived weakening of German public support for defense preparedness.

For their part, the Germans are afraid that the U.S. security commitment to Europe is lessening, at the same time that they perceive a still potent military threat from the Soviet Union and increasing instability in the East. They are seeking security guarantees from their allies in the West. If U.S.

forward deployed forces in Central Europe are drastically reduced and if U.S. strategic forces are significantly cut through a START agreement with the Soviet Union, then the necessity of the French defense commitment will become more obvious to the German public.⁸⁰

The Germans believe that Franco-German cooperation will not weaken NATO, but instead will strengthen it by associating France more closely with the Alliance, under the axioms of French defense policy. Bonn sees Franco-German ties constituting a more solid foundation upon which the European contribution to the common Alliance defense can be optimized and NATO strengthened. The Germans see no security alternative to the American deterrence guarantee. They believe that European forces do not have the same political and strategic quality in the eyes of the Soviet Union as do those of the United States. Bonn, therefore, wants expanded Franco-German ties to reinforce and not break up European and Atlantic defense arrangements.

The Germans have a long list of what can and should be done in future Franco-German military cooperation. They favor, for example, increased interoperability and examination of units each side could assign to the other. Bonn wants French nuclear doctrine to be harmonized with Alliance doctrine and seeks more information on French nuclear weapons employment plans for German territory. The Germans would also like the French to participate

in formulating future operational concepts for the Central Region, which will replace the current "layer cake" posture.

Germany is interested in forming a multinational corps with the French and, in this context, to station German forces also on French territory. At the same time, Bonn wants strong French forces to remain stationed on German territory.

In the future, Germany would like more cooperation in military intelligence, since the French will have AWACS operational in 1992. Finally, Bonn is looking for new fields for joint weapons development, and seeks to explore options for expanding the Franco-German Brigade, either bilaterally or multinationally.⁸¹

IMPLICATIONS

The Franco-German effort to reach a much closer defense relationship has implications for the U.S. and the Western Alliance as a whole. On a negative note, the Paris-Bonn enterprise may work against the U.S. by reducing U.S. influence in Germany. Moreover, some Alliance planners fear that the growing relationship could actually detract from NATO by establishing competing structures to the Alliance.

The strengthening of the Paris-Bonn link, however, does not

necessarily imply abandonment of either NATO or reliance on the U.S. for their ultimate security. As President Mitterrand has said, "The worst danger for us would be that Americans move away from the shores of our continent."⁸² In seeking a common foreign and security policy, French and German leaders recently emphasized that the Atlantic Alliance, including a continuing military presence of the United States in Europe, remains indispensable for European security and stability.⁸³ Both countries realize that, in the eyes of the Soviets, European military forces simply do not carry the same weight as U.S. military power.

Franco-German steps will likely encourage other West Europeans toward greater defense collaboration. Cooperative military enterprises among the European allies are desirable for both Western Europe and the U.S. Multinational units, for example, are likely to diminish national rivalries and reduce tensions among participating countries.⁸⁴ In addition, Bonn sees these efforts to be in the German vital interest.

Franco-German military links could promote greater cohesion, standardization, and interoperability among European militaries, thereby strengthening the Alliance's overall military capabilities. Militarily strong allies give the U.S. a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union and other potential adversaries.

The growing Franco-German relationship also serves to draw the French back to NATO through a greater military commitment to the defense of Germany. Finally, increased cooperation may meet U.S. demands that Europe carry a greater share of the military burden and be more forthcoming on out-of-area issues. This would allow the U.S. to reshape its fiscally-constrained military forces with less risk.

ENDNOTES

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